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SUBJECT: KUWAIT MEDIA REACTION - ELECTIONS: WOMEN IN PARLIAMENT;
ISLAMIST POSITION; TRUE DEMOCRACY

Block Quotes

Monday, June 26, 2006

-- Conservative Arabic daily Al-Watan published an article by Aysha Al-Noury with the headline, "A Parliament with a Feminine Flavor" where she stated, "Political participation of women today carries with it great ambiguity about the percentage of women's contribution and for whom will women vote. However, Kuwaiti women are capable of making the right choice, and voting for the qualified candidate who would make their voices heard in Parliament. Even if women do not win seats as MPs, their vote and their political participation will definitely make a difference, and instigate a momentum of change in its composition."

-- Under the headline, "Yes...We Were and Still Are Opposed to Women Running for Office," Ahmed M. Al-Fahad asserted in conservative Arabic daily Al-Watan, "Whether or not dinosaurs [former liberal MPs] at the democratic podium were convinced of the role of Kuwaiti women, whether they withdrew from the race to give their wives a better chance in the race, supporters and candidates of the Islamist group must answer the question 'Are women allowed to run for office?' Islamists are, with God's grace, in harmony with each other and with their decision. They were and continue to be opposed to women assuming political leadership positions for these reasons: first, because the experience of Kuwaiti women has not reached the required maturity level, and second, assuming a seat at the National Assembly means giving women general sovereignty rights. In this case women would participate in the decision-making process on declaring wars, or even calling for the removal of the Amir from power. Islamists are against this, but still are running in the election. In a similar fashion, the liberals disagree with running the election based on the current distribution of electoral districts, yet they still run in the election, too."

--In his daily column in the pro-government Arabic daily Al-Seyassah titled, "Democracy Is Not Just Elections," professor of Political Science at Kuwait University Dr. Ahmed Baghdadi clarified, "He errs who thinks that democratic systems are found by just setting up ballot boxes every four years. He also would be wrong to think that majority voting in the Parliament means achieving true democracy. These are a few requirements for a democracy, which have been outdated. In other words, we should not pride ourselves by having these requirements, and assume that we have a democratic system. Let us not forget that Kuwait is not a democratic country. Rather it is a state that was based on a democratic governing system, and there is a big difference between the two concepts. In a democratic state,

the people chose and elect their ruler to govern for a set period of time. A democratic state guarantees the rights of its citizens according to clear and fixed standards."

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